

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9753

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 0486

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, AO

SUBJECT: INCREASED SOVIET INFLUENCE IN ANGOLA

REF: STATE 304274

1. IN JANUARY 10 DISCUSSION MFA DIRECTOR FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS RACHELE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN REPORT REFTEL BUT SAID THAT ITALIAN ASSESSMENT IS THAT CUBANS REMAIN PRINCIPAL FOREIGN INFLUENCE IN ANGOLA. RACHELE AGREED THAT SOVIETS HAVE MADE SOME GAINS IN ANGOLA IN RECENT MONTHS BUT THOUGHT THAT REASON WAS NETO'S DESIRE TO REPAIR RELATIONS (FOLLOWING DETERIORATION AS RESULT OF ABORTIVE COUP IN MAY) SO THAT HE COULD FACE MPLA CONGRESS WITHOUT OPPOSITION. NETO'S TRIP TO MOSCOW AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MPLA FROM A MOVEMENT INTO A PARTY, FOR INSTANCE, WERE BOTH UNDERTAKEN TO PLEASE SOVIETS AND TO INFLUENCE THEM TO BACK NETO AGAINST ANY DISSIDENT ELEMENTS IN MPLA. IN ADDITION, NETO CONTINUES TO NEED SOVIET FINANCIAL SUPPORT

2. RACHELE SAID THAT ITALIANS NEVERTHELESS THINK EVIDENCE POINTS TO CONCLUSION THAT CUBANS REMAIN DOMINANT. AT CONGRESS NETO LAUDED CUBANS AT GREAT LENGTH AND MENTIONED SOVIETS MUCH MORE BRIEFLY AND
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MUCH LESS WARMLY. IN RECENT GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE, PRO-CUBAN MODERATES REINFORCED THEIR POSITION. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS BENTO RIBEIRO, FOR EXAMPLE, KNOWN TO BE MODERATE AND ANTI-SOVIET, WAS PROMOTED TO IMPORTANT POST OF MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND ENERGY. FINALLY, ITALIAN EMBASSY IN LUANDA CONTINUES TO NOTE PROMINENCE OF CUBANS AND VIRTUAL ABSENCE OF

SOVIETS AROUND TOWN. THESE SIGNS LEAD ITALIANS TO
CONCLUDE THAT CUBANS HAVE NOT LOST GROUND. RACHELE
ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT REPORT REFTEL WAS USEFUL INPUT
INTO CONTINUING ITALIAN EVALUATION OF BALANCE OF FORCES
IN ANGOLA.HOLMES

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